

Volume 22 Number 4 February 2003

REFORMED

Perspective

A MAGAZINE
FOR THE
CHRISTIAN
FAMILY

“Interesting
History?”

No, that's not
an oxymoron!!

What's inside?

Self-Defence is
Biblical

Millennialism
Explained

Is Gambling OK
for Christians?



The legacy of a forgettable man

Editorial

by James Dykstra

He may be the most forgettable man in Canadian history. Mike Sokolowski probably had a wife and three children and lived at 552 Henry Street in Winnipeg. That's nearly all we know about him, except for the fact that he was shot through the heart by the police on June 21, 1919.

Don't be mistaken and think Sokolowski was a wonderful man. He probably wasn't. Newspaper accounts have him shot while throwing a stone at police officers during a demonstration in the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. But this was a violent time. It wasn't unusual for the police to react with extreme measures when demonstrators became violent, and Sokolowski would've known that. By throwing that stone, he knew he was taking his life in his hands. You have to wonder what would drive a man to do that. Why did he hurl that rock, and so end up as a footnote in Canadian history?

No indoor plumbing

If you find Henry Street in Winnipeg today, it's next to a rundown industrial neighborhood. There's some hotels nearby that you probably wouldn't want to go in – not the kind of place you'd take respectable company. Henry Street is in a bad neighborhood now, and it wasn't much better then. The "North End" of Winnipeg, just north of the main downtown area, was the home for the down and out. If you didn't have much money, if you were an immigrant, or if you were Jewish, Slavic, or some other type of "undesirable" ethnic, you lived in this neighborhood. You probably couldn't get to a doctor even if you could afford one. There were no doctors in this part of town. You wouldn't have had indoor plumbing, and there was no certainty that the neighborhood outhouse had recently been emptied. Your apartment, and likely all those around you, had more people living in it than the building code allowed for. On that score you were lucky, because there was almost no chance a building inspector would ever come to your neighborhood and find out.

You shouldn't get the wrong impression and think that all of Winnipeg was bad. In many ways, this city was the place to be. Winnipeg was calling itself Chicago North being both the third largest city in Canada and the place that all east-west trains in the country ran through. If you wanted to ship something across the

country, it had to go through Winnipeg. That meant that there was a lot of industry, a lot of money, and a lot of fabulously wealthy people in the city.

Yet for the poor, things had just become even worse. The First World War had just ended, and returning soldiers wanted jobs. Canada's economy was a mess and there were no jobs to be had. Not only were living conditions bad, but with no job, there was no hope of moving anywhere better. Worse still, if you couldn't pay the rent, you might be evicted from your hovel and left out on the street.

It was in this city of contrasts that Mike Sokolowski lived. The desperately poor lived not far from the wonderfully rich. All the creature comforts that the poor lacked the rich had. Even things like basic medicine that the rich took for granted the poor were denied. The poor were close enough to the rich to see what they were missing, and desperate enough to try to do something about it.

The NDP's beginning

In this volatile atmosphere the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike erupted and men like Sokolowski died. They'd had enough and took foolish chances. Yet things could've been worse except for the work of a handful of dedicated men and women who labored in the poorest parts of towns and tried to help those in the greatest need. They came in the name of Christ and strove to improve the living conditions of the poorest of the poor.

Though most of them have been forgotten, except for a handful of notables like Rev. J.S. Woodsworth, their work has not. About 15 years later these same people entered politics to try and help the disadvantaged in a way they'd failed to with more direct action. They founded the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, and its successor, the New Democratic Party, still fights valiantly for left-of-centre causes even today.

Christians but no Calvinists

All sorts of churches were involved in the relief work and the subsequent political action. Though most of the workers were Methodist, most other churches in town were also involved. In fact really the only church that was conspicuous by its absence was the Presbyterian Church. Somehow, the Calvinists in this church were able to stand back and watch while others got their hands dirty and did the work. For

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those who attend Presbyterian or Reformed churches today, it's an embarrassing legacy.

The Presbyterians undoubtedly had their reasons. The social gospel preached by those who went into the poor neighborhoods had quickly become a squishy religious formula to help people out of their poverty. Those preaching this gospel cried "save this man now" and forgot to "save this sinner now." The social gospelists sought to build the kingdom of God here on earth, and forgot that not all of God's work was going to be accomplished in the here and now. The Presbyterians, having the intellectual strength typical of the Calvinists, undoubtedly saw this and shied away from work with the social gospel relief efforts.

In some ways, that was a pity. Calvinists, whether Presbyterian or Reformed, excel at spotting the errors in other Christians, but often fail to offer an alternative. The Presbyterians saw the flaws of the social gospel relief efforts. They realized the kingdom of God was not coming right now, here on earth, and were not involved in bringing that kind of false hope to the downtrodden. Yet the Presbyterians didn't offer real hope. Safely ensconced in their middle class homes, they didn't take the time to get their hands dirty. They could've gotten involved, and though they couldn't have totally beaten the poverty, they would've been able to provide the hope of true redemption for body and soul. They would've been able to provide the grace that had been denied to the poor of Winnipeg.

With real salvation coupled with relief from poverty, the Presbyterians could've offered real hope. For the truly desperate, the Mike Sokolowskis, these Christians should've offered an alternative. The fact that they didn't is at least partially responsible for the desperation of these men.

It's a hard lesson, yet it's necessary to look and wonder if the knowledge of the gospel that we have is safely ensconced in our own middle class homes, or whether it's where it belongs, with all the poor, insignificant, and desperate people that history forgets. If Mike Sokolowski lived in your town today, what would've happened to him?

Among other things, James Dykstra teaches history at Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



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Readers' Response



Dear Editor,

The other day we had a meeting where the leader of the Reformed Political Research Council, Peter Veenendaal, was explaining the dangers of Bill C-250 and urging us to write to politicians expressing our disagreement with this Bill. He also urged us to get local Associations for Reformed Political Action (ARPA's) going and study the timely issues. That is a good and necessary thing and although ARPA is not the only organization doing this I hope it gets going soon and that we will have fruitful discussions and studies.

In addition to ARPA there is also Focus on the Family, the Evangelical Fellowship, C.J.L. or C.P.J. and the Canada Family Action Coalition in that kind of business. With all these groups there is still one question that keeps bothering me. What is being done with all the knowledge we acquire and all the information we receive from these institutions? We send letters and petitions to politicians but what else do we do? What is done at election time? I am afraid that at election time we quite often nullify all the work that was done with petitions and letters, not to mention the work done to get these actions going.

Do we vote for the Liberals, the party that saddled us with abortion on demand? Now we have more than 100,000 women per year needing an abortion for "health reasons" payable by the taxpayers.

Or do we vote for the PC's, the party that never did anything to undo this Liberal crime?

Or for the NDP, the party that vigorously promotes the crime?

Or for the Alliance, the party that like Pontius Pilate, washes its hands in innocence and lets other people make the decisions for its members?

Or any other parties that avoid or ignore moral issues?

Or do we play into the hands of the Devil by NOT voting? That old Father of Lies likes nothing better than that protesters do not vote at all!

What should we then do? Yes, I know there are many excuses against voting for the Christian Heritage Party (CHP). Some of these excuses have some truth to them, but others are just that: excuses. The main problem is that the CHP doesn't have candidates in every federal riding so many Christians are deprived of their chance to vote for a principled candidate. The CHP simply does not have enough funds or volunteers, or candidates.

So where are the funds and the volunteers? The volunteers are sitting at home, sitting on their money, which they can't even take with them anyway. We (especially our young people) are not interested in politics, but politics is very much interested in us. The CHP cannot give us what we want because we do not give what the CHP needs to give us what we want.

Wake up Christians!

Hank Metzlar
Guelph, Ontario

Sure buddy, flowers and chocolates might have *seemed* like a good gift to get her for Valentine's Day.

But all she really wanted was a subscription to *Reformed Perspective*.

Now Mother's Day is coming up fast and you've got to figure out what to get dear ol' mom. You're not going to make the same mistake twice, are you?

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The magazine for the whole family.



Africa on the Comeback Trail

by Margaret Helder

On December 9, 2002, three African heads of state met on the muddy banks of the Limpopo River. Presidents Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe had come to formally create a new international wildlife reserve. Extending more than 38,000 square kilometres, this new park includes South Africa's famous Kruger National Park, Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park and Mozambique's recently created Limpopo National Park. It is expected that lions, rhinos, elephants and the like, will range freely over the whole region. This agreement follows a similar one made last year between South Africa and Botswana to create Kgalagadi, a reserve stretching another 38,000 square kilometres consisting of

South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park. Undoubtedly these are positive initiatives, and undoubtedly visions of ecotourism are a major consideration for the governments involved. However, important questions cloud these optimistic forecasts. These countries are extremely different in their recent histories but one thing they share: plenty of reasons to worry about the future.

Botswana

Botswana has long been considered perhaps the brightest spot on the sub-Saharan scene. This tiny landlocked country was, during the period 1960-1990, one of only three jurisdictions in Africa to enjoy a multiparty political system. Indeed interna-

tional observers consider that the prospects for continued democracy here are excellent. This situation produces other good results. Despite drought, farmers continue to produce good crops of beans, corn, cowpeas, millet and sorghum. Population density is a low two persons per square kilometre, which is just as well since much of the territory is desert. An important byproduct of the political stability is a booming economy (by African standards) with export generated dollars of over \$1600 US per person in 2001.

Despite all the good news, Botswana suffers from a crushing AIDS infection rate. Life expectancy has fallen from 63.8 years in 1990 to 39.3 years in 2000 and it may well decline to 29 years by 2010. This is scarcely surprising in view of the fact that 35% of adults were infected by 1999 and the percentage may still be climbing. As a result, young adults are dying faster than any other group. The effects on extended family connections, on agriculture and on business are very heavy when so many workers in the prime of life are lost. So the situation in Botswana is not so rosy as it might be.

South Africa

South Africa is the other relatively good news jurisdiction. Its history of democracy is not as long standing as Botswana's, but the government still seems to be reasonably stable. For much of the twentieth century, white settlers controlled an independent government which was part of the British Commonwealth. In 1961 South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth. This country then became very isolated on the international scene as a result of apartheid policies which had been in place since independence in 1910. Finally in 1989 the government of Frederik de Klerk set out to dismantle apartheid. As a result, in April 1994 the first all race elections were held and Nelson Mandela was elected the first black head of state. The world has been pleasantly surprised at the enlightened policies of the South African governments since 1994. For example, President Mandela's government soon discovered that almost one third of the population lacked access to clean drinking water. That percentage has now been halved during a time when the population actually increased by ten percent. It is hoped that all people will have access to safe drinking water within six years.

Because of the stable political situation, South Africa also benefits from a reasonably good economy. Like Botswana, the farmers continue to produce surplus crops in spite of the drought. The value of exports per person is only about one third of that of Botswana, but South Africa is a much larger country. The population here is 41 million with a density of 34 people per square kilometre. Not too surprisingly, AIDS is also a problem in South Africa but not to the same extent as in Botswana. About 20% of adults are infected which is reason enough for major concern.

Zimbabwe

Of the four countries under discussion, Zimbabwe has the smallest territory but the

most extreme problems. Like Botswana, this is a landlocked country. Unlike Botswana, which has enjoyed democracy since independence in 1966, Zimbabwe has suffered a long sad history of political turmoil. Formerly called Rhodesia, the white settlers achieved self-governing status in 1923 under British sovereignty. Forty years later, the white Rhodesians demanded complete independence from the mother country, but Britain asked for guarantees that the black majority would be given a voice in government. In response, Rhodesia declared itself independent on November 11, 1965. This was the first country to declare independence from Britain since the American Declaration in 1776. The situation now went from bad to worse for the new country since the international community refused to sanction this government. Finally in 1978, the white government of the day reached an agreement with moderate black leaders, which led to Methodist bishop Abel T. Muzorewa becoming the first black prime minister. Apparently the international community

didn't like him either. Finally, as a result of new elections in 1980, guerrilla leader Robert Mugabe was elected. The international community hastened to recognize this government and new jurisdiction called Zimbabwe. Robert Mugabe has been in power ever since. One wonders if the international community is pleased with their choice. Originally an economic powerhouse under white rule, Zimbabwe has recently found itself spiraling into poverty and despair, largely as a result of disastrous government policies.

Initially the situation in Zimbabwe was not too bad. During the early years, 70,000 black families were settled onto small plots of land purchased with donor funds from willing white farmers. The vast majority of the land however remained in the hands of a few thousand white farmers. These efficiently run businesses provided secure income for hundreds of thousands of black farm workers and their dependents. Indeed these large commercial farms achieved by far the best results in African



Robert Mugabe seems to care more for his country's wildlife, than he does for its citizens.

agriculture, generating a total of about 40% of the country's export dollars.

Mr. Mugabe however had long wanted the white farmers gone from the country no matter what the cost to the economy or to the other citizens. The time for action apparently was June 2002, when half the country was facing starvation (by far the highest proportion in all of Africa). At this time Mr. Mugabe's government decreed that 60% of the commercial farmers must cease work immediately on pain of jail. As a follow up, peasants were encouraged to seize control of the farms. The displaced white owners were not paid anything. Soon the new owners took possession, not the peasants but political cronies of the prime minister. Unfortunately the new owners have no farming skills or any interest in agriculture, so the land is reverting to bush again. As a result of such policies, cereal production has tumbled by two thirds over the past two years. The government seems not to care about starving people, indeed it has actively prevented supporters of the opposition party from obtaining any food, even from foreign donors. Of the situation, one political observer remarked, "If the intention is to revert to a feudal society, where peasants scratch a mean subsistence and can be thrown off their land at the whim of their political overlords, Mr. Mugabe is doing well." (*Economist* August 17, 2002).

Obviously the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe is not good. Personal income has fallen by one half since independence in 1980. At 31 people per square kilometre, the population density is almost as high as that of South Africa, but the export dollars generated per person are less than one third of that in South Africa. Indeed, the economy has declined by at least 25% during the past three years alone. It's almost enough to make one wish for the fleshpots of Egypt, er. . . the white government of Rhodesia!

Like neighboring countries, Zimbabwe also suffers from AIDS. Like Botswana

however, this problem seems particularly acute in Zimbabwe. During the year 2000 for example, UN officials estimated that one half of all fifteen year old boys would not live to see their eighteenth birthday because of AIDS. It is certainly true that the coping abilities of the population have declined drastically. Extended families are no longer there to provide for orphaned children, professionals are dying like flies, subsistence farms stand idle because farmers are sick or dead. It is hard to imagine a sadder society.

Mozambique

Lastly there is Mozambique. Here the situation is very bleak indeed but there is cause for optimism. Political stability came to this country in 1993 after 18 debilitating years of civil war. The hostilities left the region in a shambles but the situation is improving somewhat. This country enjoys a lengthy seacoast and a territory similar in size to that of Botswana. Unlike Botswana however, the population density is high at 26 people per square kilometre. Moreover the economy is extremely depressed with export dollars at best only one tenth of that of Zimbabwe. While the proportion of people presently facing starvation is not high at the moment, recent corn, groundnut and sorghum crops have all failed. AIDS is a big problem here as well, with life expectancy said to be a mere 35 years.

Worried about wildlife

These are the jurisdictions which have set aside huge tracts of land for wildlife. Some observers have queried how secure the wildlife will be when the local people are starving. With no borders within the parks, hungry people may be able to pursue game a lot farther than previously. Some people might ask as well whether it is ethical to make such generous provision for wildlife when the local people are in such desperate straits. This is not to suggest that the animals should be sacrificed, but that the economic plight

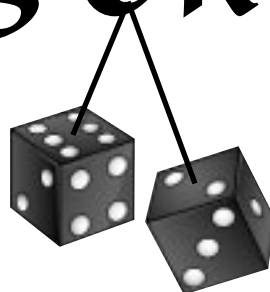
of citizens, particularly in Zimbabwe, needs to be improved. Apparently it is not drought per se which causes crop failure and starvation but political instability coupled with bad weather. There is drought in Botswana and South Africa as well as Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The crops did not fail in the former two countries, however, because the farmers were able to utilize modern technology to mitigate the effects of climate. Thus governments who are able to show concern for wildlife, should first and foremost show compassion for their fellow citizens. For a start at least, the examples of democracy in Botswana and South Africa would be good ones to emulate in Zimbabwe. Once political stability is achieved, perhaps something can be done about AIDS throughout the whole region. It is an interesting fact, not at all understood, that AIDS is a much more serious problem in the southeastern part of the African continent.

Even in Botswana we need to see more concern for people. In the Kalahari Desert there live seven hundred bushmen, a remnant of a much larger population, most of whom have been removed to bleak camps in urban areas. The seven hundred, however, refuse to leave their ancestral home. Indeed, the British government established the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in 1961 with the express purpose of providing a haven for the bushmen. Moreover, as recently as five years ago, the Botswana government assured Britain that it would never force the bushmen off the land. Nevertheless as 2002 dawned, the government of Botswana threatened to dismantle the one pump upon which this community depended for water, and, of course, for life.

It is apparent that these countries will never be a safe and satisfying place to live until individuals in power value the lives of their fellow citizens. That, of course, applies to every continent and jurisdiction. The golden rule still applies but it is not necessarily observed anywhere.



Is Gambling OK for Christians?



by Peter Veenendaal

It could have been just another news report about somebody winning a large jackpot in one of those big lotteries. You know what I mean – Lotto 649, Sports Select, *Reader's Digest*. Those enticing advertisements even pop up on your computer monitor and we don't even read them anymore. We just delete them with a click of the mouse. There are so many of them and we have grown accustomed to seeing the lineups of older and younger Canadians, cash in hand, waiting to purchase their lottery tickets in the malls, in the drugstores and even at the local cornerstores.

The big winners are generally portrayed as ordinary people, living on ordinary incomes who spend twenty or thirty dollars a week on their favorite picks. They are jubilant about their luck and already have plans to pay off the mortgage, go on a holiday and help the kids pay the college bills. Often they are very specific in explaining how they happened to choose those lucky numbers which were the up-to-now elusive keys to lifelong happiness!

This one was different!

But this news report was different; it really caught my eye! I was caught off guard and it wasn't because the winner was a 55-year-old millionaire wearing a large black cowboy hat. It wasn't because the amount won was a record \$314.7 million. It was because Andrew (Jack) Whittaker considered his huge Powerball winnings to be a blessing from God!

After hearing about his windfall, his first public statement was, "I just want to thank God." He then went on to explain that first he would tithe 10% of his win-

nings to his church. Wow! Does that mean that the warnings of our parents and pastors over the years, that Christians should not be involved in "games of chance" were only valid in certain circumstances? Does the (un)acceptability of gambling and lotteries then depend on our attitude to and plans for the winnings? Is there then an acceptable Christian way to gamble and take part in lotteries after all?

Gambling in Canada

Gambling has come to be seen both as a right and an acceptable activity in Canada. Most Canadians consider it an acceptable part of our culture which, like so many other things, has some negative consequences we have to deal with. Legal gambling is regulated by governments and matters such as what games are available,

.....
***Canadians 18 and over
 spent an average of
 \$424 per person.***

.....
 who can gamble and when, the payout rates, who can operate casinos, and advertising of their "services" are controlled by provincial legislation. The proceeds after prizes and expenses go to provincial and territorial treasuries, although some funds are earmarked for special types of funding in the public sector.

This has not always been the case. Before the mid 1970s the buying and selling of lottery tickets was against the law in Canada. Many had become accustomed to

buying tickets in the Irish Sweepstakes but it had to be done secretly, by the nation's water fountains. Big time lotteries with million dollar prizes got their start in Canada in the 1970s. The federal government recognized the potential earnings, some of which were now going out of the country via foreign gambling, so they began to sponsor Loto-Canada draws. Provincial governments soon successfully lobbied Ottawa for the exclusive right to this easy form of revenue. The provinces agreed to a profit-sharing plan with the federal government and Canada's gambling "industry" has not looked back since. Individual Canadians consider it their right to gamble. Aborigines, claiming sovereignty on their reserve lands, demand the right to operate casinos, being lured by the success of the government run operations. Some time ago I asked a Native leader how he believed a casino on his reserve would benefit his people. His only response was, "You are allowed to have them in your communities; why can we not have them in ours?"

Studies have shown that over 70% of Canadians have participated in some form of gambling in the last year and nearly half have bought a lottery ticket during that time. About a quarter of these are regular gamblers and play their favorite game at least once a week. No one knows for sure how much money is involved, but legal forms of gambling probably add up to between \$20 billion and \$27 billion annually. And it is growing. NewsScan, a newsletter for the Responsible Gambling Council reports that Canadians 18 and over spent an average of \$130 gambling in 1992 and by 2000 this figure had risen to \$424 per person.

It is not difficult to see why governments are reluctant to let go of their control over this lucrative business and why they continue to look for expansion opportunities. In 2000, Canada's net government gambling revenues reached \$10.7 billion. Governments gain support for their investment in the gambling industry by distributing some of these proceeds to local community projects. Casinos accounted for 32% of this revenue, lotteries comprised 30% and VLT's (video lottery terminals, aptly referred to as one-armed bandits) bring in 25% of this amount. The Canadian gambling industry provides 12,000 jobs for Canadians. Not much wonder then that big money is spent on slick advertising on prime time TV to spread the allure of casinos, lotteries and scratch tickets. Not much wonder that more and more young Canadians are turning to gambling in the hope of striking it rich.

How should Christians react to all of this? Should they approve of all this with the belief that it depends on your motivation? How should Christians react when they see their governments promoting gambling and lotteries in their jurisdictions in the name of job creation?

What's wrong with it?

There are so many forms of gambling going on around us every day that it would take many pages to try to deal with every one of them in full detail. One Christian author has categorized them as follows: sweepstakes, lotteries, lotto/bingo, bets, roulette, gambling, and speculation. Then there are the familiar card games, guessing contests, fund-raisers, door prizes, or promotional giveaways. The reluctance to condemn all these comes in a variety of ways. Businesses try to legitimize them by including a skill-testing question for the winner. Often participants try to justify them by labeling them as harmless entertainment. I have even heard it said that it is poor stewardship to throw away a ticket that you received for free!

Christian opposition to participation in gambling has generally been based on the evils of selfish desire, false dreams, deceit



Andrew Whittaker won \$314.7 million in the lottery and then went on to give ten percent of the winnings to his church.

and an unwillingness to work to provide for daily needs. The temptations which come with desiring and having wealth are many. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Andrew Whittaker tried to justify his participation in the Powerball Lottery by attributing his win to God's providence and then giving a portion of it back to his church. He also planned to hire back 25 workers he laid off before Christmas. That all sounds very nice but the end still does not justify the means. Christians do not need to put their trust in "chance" but should "trust [in God] so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide [them] with all things necessary for body and soul" (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 9). Has Whittaker not considered the thousands who through their regular purchase of lottery tickets have made his huge win possible and by so doing have caused financial hardships on themselves and those around them? And what's wrong for Whittaker is surely wrong for our governments as well! How can our political leaders justify preying on the weaknesses of their citizens in order to serve their own political agendas and attain their financial goals? Any institution who realizes at what human costs the lottery winnings have been earned, will not

accept the proceeds of gambling regardless of whether the beneficiaries are churches or hospitals or sports teams.


Sad stories

Many of these griefs and hardships are caused by the addictive nature of gambling which has proven to be the undoing of many individuals and their families. Here are some facts I found on the website of a group which counsels problem gamblers:

- 1) At least 1 in 40 gamblers is likely to develop a gambling problem
- 2) Each problem gambler can affect 5 or more other people
- 3) Gambling often goes with alcohol and drugs
- 4) Managing personal finances and household budgets is difficult for gamblers
- 5) About 1 in 6 gambling addicts is stealing to fuel his habit.

Taking God's Name in vain

Many are the sad stories of lives, marriages, families, relationships, and businesses destroyed by the sins associated with gambling. By accompanying a big win of millions of dollars with a pious "Praise the Lord" Andrew Whittaker Jr. has done a disservice to his fellow Christians by trying to legitimize the selfish motivations associated with gambling. In so doing, his comments have the potential to mislead many, including young people, who, in a big way, are already influenced by advertising promoting gambling. Many Christians may be led to believe that, with the right motivations, gambling is OK. But worst of all, Whittaker takes the Lord's Holy Name in vain by suggesting that God will be pleased if only we give Him a share of the loot. Gambling must be seen for what it really is – a sin which leads us away from the path of life. Instead of seeking our salvation in earthly riches, let us heed the words of Hymn 48:4 in the *Book of Praise*:

With song and prayer in faith
progressing,
In all you do God's will obey.
Expect from Him alone our blessing:
He will renew it every day,
For God will never those disown
Who put their trust in Him alone. 



HOMEFRONT

Generation Bridge

by Jane deGlint

Every person is born into a generation. At the time of birth this is not so obvious. The child is the center of his own world and does not have any sense of history yet. He lives in the here and now. But before long the little boy realizes that he is part of a continuous line of people. He has a father, who has his own father, and so on. The little boy also observes that his father's preference of leisure activities, manner of speech and choice of music differ from those of his grandfather. Likewise the young girl discovers that her parents had parents. Invariably she also notices, usually sooner than later, that her grandparents represent a line of clothing and a style of interior decoration which are different from those of her parents. The awareness of generations awakens at a very young age in attentive children.

Especially among the younger generation the notion prevails that older generations are somewhat stale. There is the subtle reasoning that bright intellect, analytical skill and mechanical advancement are the privilege of those who are in their youthful vigor. An implication of this type of thinking is the theory that the human race will improve over time, since it is unthinkable that those who now hold the monopoly to mental power will lose their grip. Words like "modern" and "updated" have the connotation of acceptable and functional, while the phrase "outdated" is so loaded with rejection that no person or thing would like to be associated with it. To the young there is no doubt: their generation is the cutting edge of human betterment.

Allow me to continue in generalizations.

The older folks have not at all dispelled the idea that they are superior. Readily or reluctantly admitting to the technical superiority of the young ones, they now switch the weight from skill to wisdom,

from knowledge to insight, from intellect to experience. They have not surrendered the concept that they must teach the younger generations. Overlooking their own immaturities (which, unfortunately, do not disappear with age) they are quick to point out that the younger generation has much to learn when it comes to the proprieties. For sure, the grandson of William and Betty might be smart and earn more in a month than they did in a year, but he certainly has no manners and is too smug – such whippersnapper.

Here we see in front of us the infamous generation gap. It stretches out from left to right as far as the eye reaches. Any attempt to build a bridge is doomed to failure, since the other side remains forever out of reach as it continues its retreat. Resignation to a split society seems the best coping mechanism. With benevolent gestures of the old towards the young (wise lessons), reciprocated with generous moves from the young toward the old (nifty gadgets), a workable status quo is maintained.

The picture drawn with these general strokes portrays a truth as caricature. Though it justifiably highlights the difference between age groups, it represents a humanistic worldview. As each individual extends his identity to his generation, he considers his group the center of culture in a society that is ever coming closer to perfection.

The vantage point of faith in our Covenant Lord offers a much broader and more balanced perspective. The Bible speaks quite frequently about generations. As a matter of fact, the approach to history is strictly generational. Genesis opens with the generations of heaven and earth, when they were created (Genesis 2:4). It continues with dividing the history of God's dealings with man according to generation: the gen-

erations of Adam, the generations of Noah, the generations of the sons of Noah, the generations of Terah, the generations of Ishmael, the generations of Isaac, the generations of Esau, the generations of Jacob.

As is clear from this enumeration, generations were not foremost divided by age group, but by ancestor. If you belonged to a certain generation, you were identified with the beliefs of your ancestor. Each time one branch of the family left the line of the covenant, the man who left became the namesake of the wayward generation, while his faithful sibling was named as the head of the next generation of believers. After the generation of Jacob all attention remains focused on the tribes of Israel, till the coming of the Christ.

Besides these general generations, the Bible also speaks of generations as age groups. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" is the familiar phrase from the Ten Commandments that uses the word "generation" to indicate the group of immediate descendants, born to one man. But even when the word is used in this sense, it is still stressed that within the covenant all generations will be united. Bound together in the service to their Lord, they receive the promise that the Lord will be with them from generation to generation. The people of the Covenant Lord are individuals who belong to the generations of believers. "He is mindful of his covenant forever, of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

After the atoning work of the Savior, all nations of the earth are joined to the generations of Israel. "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people!" These words of Romans 15 verse 10 echo Psalm 117, "Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!"

For great is his steadfast love toward us; and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever." For people of the Covenant Lord there will be a distinction between fathers and sons, but this does not result in a generation gap. The chasm of individualism is bridged by the conviction that parents and children together serve their Lord and each other in love.

An objective look at reality bears this out as well. In a functional family a mutual bond exists between parents and children. A newborn may upset the household with his feeding schedule and colic spells, yet he is engulfed with love by parents and siblings alike. As the toddler becomes a school-aged child, he becomes more objective toward his parents. He notices that other parents have different rules for their children, while teachers become a source of great influence as well. This may lead to some criticism of his parents, yet rarely does the school child question his parents' love for him.

The teenager stands out for his drive toward independence. This focus on his own place and contribution often causes him to look down on his parents. If there is a generation gap, this is the time that is shows, and it might be surmised that anyone who overemphasizes the lack of rapport between the young and the old, is somewhat stuck in the adolescent stage.

Remarkably, young adults start to look at their parents already in a more positive light again. As they start to cope with the pressures of raising a family and holding down a job, they gain more respect for what their parents accomplished. Conversely, at this stage parents change the way they regard their offspring. No longer do they look at their children as charges who need their guidance, but they begin to admire them for their accomplishments and endurance. Once the middle-aged stage has been reached, the roles shift even more, as parents may become dependent on their children. If parents and children have always treated each other with respect, they now enjoy the bond of this reversed dependence with natural confidence, ease and humor.



Parents bear the initial responsibility for the bridging of the gap. More succinctly, when parents take their task seriously, the gap may turn out to be nothing more than a difference in age, experience and custom. The most effective gap prevention occurs in families where parents understand that they must teach their children all they know and all they believe. If they are unable to look after that themselves, they will enlist the help of professionals. Of course, there are restrictions. Children do not need to know the same academic or occupational intricacies as their parents. But all the more so, parents must be aware of the necessity to teach their children whatever is possible, both directly by instruction and indirectly by example.

The potential gap between the generations is preventively bridged in several sections.

The most important bond between parents and children is the worship of the Lord of the Covenant. The Holy Spirit uses the means of parental teaching to work faith in the heart of a child. It is one of the most encouraging moments in Christian childrearing when parents notice that the bridge is built from both sides. How encouraging it is to hear a child reciprocate with a testimony of faith to a troubled parent: "Be happy, Dad, the Lord will look after us." How humbling to receive the admonition: "Don't do that Mom; the Lord does not want that." How moving to hear the mumbled voice of a teenaged child utter the birthday greeting: "Congratulations; may God bless you."

Interwoven with the bond of faith is the instillment of values. Since a value is in itself an abstract entity, this section of the bridge is mostly founded in parental example. Here the adage "I'll do as you do and not as you say" is quite applicable. By watching their parents, children learn courage, respect, humility, forgiveness, gratitude, diligence and generosity.

Bridge building includes the teaching of customs as well. Traditions are an expression of a conviction. They give shape to what is important. New Year celebrations, food preparation, dress and hair code, social behavior and wedding ceremonies are all parts of custom. Though some of these traditions seem rather insignificant, together they become the building blocks for a culture. However, since they are only a manifestation of a truth, and not the truth itself, they can be changed, replaced or even discarded. As casual as custom teaching often is, it should always seek to balance loyalty to the past with flexibility for the future. It must be taught in detail out of respect for its origin, but with an open mind for the way it is continued.

The teaching of skills is an extension of custom building, but it deserves to be mentioned separately. Parents do wise to teach their children whatever skills they have: a repertoire of songs, the ability to cross-stitch, an appreciation for classical writers and/or composers, wood carving or vegetable growing. Family skills form a common bond and offer opportunities for creative cooperation between young and old.

Learning from the past and preparing for the future, generations enhance each other if they join their resources. God-fearing generations have the lead in bridging the gap, as they stand united on the fundament of faith. Believing parents and children hold hands. The two sides have met – a bridge is no longer required. Bound together in faith the families of the covenant spread their riches to the ends of the earth, till all nations and tongues will be reached with the Word.

"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).



Lest we forget

When it comes to topics people are interested in, history is not a subject that ranks very high. In today's society the exclusive focus seems to be on "the here and now" only. The past is obsolete. Yet such a climate stifles inner reflection. It simply breeds social and historical amnesia. It's surely not in line with what Scripture teaches. The Bible is full of calls to remember.

Rev. A. Veldman

by Rene Vermeulen

In December our church celebrated its 50th anniversary. It was a time to remember past events and to enjoy the company of many brothers and sisters. One of the features was the publication of a booklet called "His wonderful works" which tells the history of the Free Reformed Church in Albany, Western Australia.

The above quotation by Rev. Veldman was made in connection with his contribution to this booklet. In his article he points out that Israel was told to remember the deeds of the Lord. We too should remember past deeds but in our fast paced world, ever concentrating on the here and now, we have little time for history.

As someone said: "History is something that dead people did." The idea is clear – what interest should people of today have in something that happened long ago? What is really to be gained by reading and studying what someone like Hendrik de Kok did some 170 years ago? Has that any relevance for us today? And then mum and dad or possibly grandpa and grandma will often talk about the Liberation. And what do we really care about this professor. . . Schilder or something like that? What is far more important is that I get my grades at school, or win my next



Sir Winston Churchill

hockey game, and that we get ready to go on that big vacation!

We are very much involved with I, me, and that means that other things are just not important.

Bound to repeat it

Having said all that I realize that there are some readers who will be offended – readers who do all they can to instruct their children in the history of the church, school, country etc., readers who even while they were young had a lively interest in matters historical. But nevertheless it seems to this observer that history is not

highly regarded. I can accept that from the world, but we cannot accept it from church people. For it's also well known that those who fail to take notice of history are bound to repeat it.

Countries which think that we now live in a better world, and that therefore what happened years ago really does not matter, will never learn that human nature has not changed. Evil is still what actuates so many people. Greed and avarice are so close to many.

It was that great statesman and WWII leader, Sir Winston Churchill, who stated: "To test the present you must appeal

to history.” Churchill had experienced in his own life that failure to learn from the past would lead to making the same mistakes again. Churchill took a stand very much against British public opinion when he called on the British government in the 1930s to prepare for war. Then British opinion loudly applauded Neville Chamberlain on his return from Munich where he had received the assurance from Adolf Hitler, the German dictator, that he did not seek war. Churchill, who had read well and widely, did not believe it and kept calling for the British to rearm. Not so very much later he was proven right: Hitler invaded Poland and the rest is history, so they say.

Piet Jongeling

When I was growing up, during the 50s and 60s, we read a Reformed daily newspaper. It was in Dutch of course, and even after I married I read this paper for many years. The editor of this paper was Piet Jongeling. Jongeling was both editor as well as a member of the Dutch parliament. He had spent the war years in captivity in a German concentration camp for activities against the invader of his country. One of the features of his leadership of this paper was his broad knowledge of the past. He was fully conversant with the history of both church and state. The result was that those who regularly read his paper inevitably turned to the history books to acquaint themselves with what he was writing.

Why was this man so highly regarded both in the church and in parliament? Because when he spoke he knew what he was talking about – he had done his homework. At the same time he was not that highly educated; before he entered journalism he had been a schoolteacher. But the man read and read well and widely and he passed on to ordinary people like myself some of the rudiments of historical understanding.

OT needed to understand NT

In all areas of life a good understanding of the past is essential. You cannot

rightly interpret the New Testament without an understanding of the Old Testament. The same principle applies to church history. Unless people know and understand the past and the ideas of the past they will repeat the mistakes of their forefathers.



History is incomprehensible without Christ.



Of course we should not only remember their mistakes but also the achievements, the struggles of our forefathers. I am thinking here of the article which our minister wrote which I quoted at the beginning of this article. Unless our young people know what their forebears went through years ago they will never appreciate the riches they have received.

I realize that there is much that agitates against this. There is the box which today is in so many if not most lounge rooms. The TV has taken over from reading. Too many of today’s educationists believe history is bunk. So it gets taught less and less. Modern gadgets such as DVD players and the mobile phone, etc. have become so important to most that there is no time for reading.

I was rather taken with a quote from one Ernest Renan who stated: “All history is incomprehensible without Christ.” That would explain why so many in state education systems do not teach history. If Renan is right, and I think he is, then without a knowledge of Scripture and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ history has little to teach people.

Thanking God for blessings of the past

As Reformed people we should be more interested in history. We ourselves have a long history as churches. I am sure that no reformed person would want to make the mistakes of the past. We all want to move on. And that interest in history

should not only be concerned with the history of the church but equally with the history of the country and state we live in. Such knowledge will make us wise enough, when we acquire that knowledge, to thank God for His works in the past.

Each year when Canadians/Australians remember their fallen in war, the words I started with are used as part of the service: “Lest we forget.” So often the young people standing at these remembrance ceremonies know very little of the past, but that should not apply to us and our children. We should be keen to know the history of God’s church and the country we live in.

Lest we forget, indeed!



How well do you know your history?

Rene Vermeulen’s article makes reference to a number of historical figures and events. How many of them do you know?

1. Who was Hendrik de Kok (aka Hendrik de Cock) and what event is he known for? (2 points)
2. In the third paragraph a reference is made to “the Liberation.” When did this Liberation occur, and who was liberated? (2 points)
3. What is Professor Schilder’s first name? (1 point)
4. What position did Neville Chamberlain hold when he went and talked to Adolf Hitler? (1 point)
5. Piet Jongeling wrote a number of children’s books under a pen name. What was this pen name and what was the name of the German Shepherd dog featured in many of these children’s books? (2 points)

Turn to the following page for answers and to see how you scored

Abraham Lincoln:

The slavery fighting, scripture quoting, martyred father of his country

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan – to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

(From Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address)

by Reuben Bredenhof

Allow me to begin this article with a personal note, and at the same time offer an explanation for this attention paid to Abraham Lincoln. In June of 2001, my wife and I had the opportunity to voyage down to Washington DC on our honeymoon. We stayed in that remarkable city for about a week, touring the Smithsonian Museums, the Capitol Buildings, the White House, the Pentagon, and also visiting the various memorials throughout the district.

On one evening, with a fantastic thunderstorm raging overhead, we investigated the Lincoln Memorial at the west end of the Reflecting Pool. It was a memorable experience, climbing the flight of well-worn steps to the grand white marble edifice. It is an imposing structure, based on enormous pillars, yet the interior is quite austere – only the statue of a seated Lincoln, deep in contemplation, some 20 feet high, looms out at you. Despite the presence of a large group of noisy 4-H’ers from across the States, the atmosphere inside was almost electric – there was an air of . . . (dare I call it) reverence throughout the building. It seemed that the thoughtful Lincoln could hold your gaze as you stared up at this statue in an awe that was hard to suppress.

Some of the walls of the interior had sections from Lincoln’s speeches engraved



Lincoln wrote his own speeches, and in these were scattered biblical allusions and Scripture quotes.

on them. It was the words that I read that really quickened my curiosity about this cold marble fellow at whose feet I sat, and it was my curiosity that precipitated this article. The words from one speech in particular piqued my interest, from his Second Inaugural Address of March 4, 1865. Suddenly interested in this man Abraham Lincoln, I snatched up a copy of *Abraham Lincoln: Great Speeches* (unabridged) in the souvenir shop in the basement of the building.

In the book I read that at the occasion of the inauguration day for Lincoln’s second term as President, with the amendment to the constitution that freed the American slaves newly passed, and with the civil war against the Confederates in the south nearly won, he delivered a speech that has been memorized by countless Americans, and endlessly parsed and analyzed by many historians. The Christian tenor of his address surprised me, so used to the sanitized and culturally sensitive political language of our day. I also noted in the book’s preface that Lincoln wrote his own speeches, and in these were scattered Biblical allusions and Scripture quotes.

In his second inaugural address he mourns the gaping wound that the 3 year-old civil war has opened in America between brothers and fellow countrymen:

“Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.”

Further on Lincoln speaks of the offense that is slavery, “The Almighty has his own purposes. ‘Woe unto the world because of

offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" And later, "Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue. . . as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

We note that he alludes to or quotes from in this single address Genesis 3:19 (the sweat of your brow), Matthew 7:1 (judge not), Matthew 18:7 (woe to that man), and Psalm 19:9 (judgments of the Lord), in addition to fourteen other references to God.



"He held opinions utterly at variance with what are usually taught in the church."



What about this man, Abraham Lincoln? Was he an exegete as well as a President? Was he a zealous Christian, who was not afraid to speak of his faith? Or did he just use the Scriptures as a thesaurus of quotations, to lend his speeches a religious and dignified air in an age where the Christian message was generally accepted, even in the public square?

Seen as a savior figure

According to the history books I consulted, there was in the United States, and perhaps there still is, a tendency to see Lincoln as a savior figure. He is credited with *saving* the Union after the disastrous civil war – his conciliatory attitude to the South set a positive example for the rest of the North to follow as they struggled with accepting the rebels of the Confederate side back into the fold. He saw the civil war as a *crusade* for truth and right. He sought to *bind* the wounds of war, and to *liberate* the slaves, and he even gave his life for this

cause in *martyrdom* – assassinated in 1865, on, of all days. . . *Good Friday*. It was perceived by the American people that "Lincoln's life lay sacrificed on the altar of unity," killed five days after the end of the Civil War. Even his name suggested to the people his religious significance: Abraham, the *father* of the nation. Lincoln spoke of his country as "the last, best hope of the earth," and of its citizens as "the almost-chosen people." More than one author has suggested that Lincoln's religious-toned speeches have become the new Scriptures for the so-called American civil religion. And this seems to be a valid point, considering that his words are often memorized, quoted, and in his Memorial in Washington – carved in stone.

It is said that Lincoln has attained an almost mythical status in America: born into poverty, he rose from his humble origins ("from a log cabin to the White House") through self-discipline, honesty, ambition, and common sense to guide his country through the dark days of Civil War. A book called *Worship Programs in the Fine Arts for Young People* has one telling lesson that involves the contemplation of a statue of Lincoln. The aim of the service is: "to lead the group to a keener appreciation of the truths which Abraham Lincoln exemplified in his life." The group is asked to meditate on the Christian ideals for which Lincoln stood: liberty, justice, and the worth and rights of individuals.

His faith

Much has been written on Abraham Lincoln, the Christian. The basic facts of his Christianity are often the starting point of such speculative discussions: he never joined a church, or ever made a clear profession of standard Christian beliefs; he regularly read the Bible in the White House, but rarely prayed before meals. A close friend of Lincoln's once wrote, "on the innate depravity of man, the character and office of Christ, the Atonement, the infallibility of the written revelation, the performance of miracles. . .

How well do you know your history?

Answers for questions found on previous page.

1. Hendrik de Kok was a minister in the Netherlands. In 1834 he and his congregation left the Dutch state church in an event known as "the Secession." Rev de Kok left the state church in part because he believed that consistories should hold authority over congregations and not a general assembly appointed by King William I.
2. The Liberation occurred in 1944 and again involved churches in the Netherlands who liberated themselves from a hierarchical Synod. Like Rev. de Kok these liberated churches thought that local consistories should hold authority over congregations, and not the Synod. So in this case it was churches and the people in them who were liberated.
3. Professor Klaas Schilder was a key player in the Liberation of 1944.
4. Neville Chamberlain was Britain's Prime Minister from 1937-1940. In 1938 he was one of the signatories to the Munich Pact which gave in to German demands for control over parts of Czechoslovakia. After signing this pact, Neville returned to Britain announcing that by giving in to German demands he had "secured peace in our time." World War II started approximately one year after the pact was signed.
5. Pieter Jongeling's (1909-1985) pen name was Piet Prins and the German Shepherd was called Scout (or Snuf if you read it in Dutch).

1-2 points You really need to open a history book sometime soon!
3-5 points Not too bad...but not too great either.
6-8 points Congratulations! You are as smart as you are good looking.

he held opinions utterly at variance with what are usually taught in the church." It seems Lincoln turned against "organized" Christianity at some time in his youth, apparently discouraged by frequent denominational disputes.

Lincoln has been described as "the most religious of all U.S. Presidents." He had a deep sense of a providentially guided history, and often spoke of the will of God being done even in the midst of evil and disaster. Lincoln said of himself, "I have felt His hand upon me in great trials." In the Second Inaugural Address he invoked a God who had his own ends and purpose in the disturbed events of the time. One author writes of the faith and humble submission of Lincoln: "his speeches and conversation revealed a spiritual perception far above the ordinary." Another says, "He expressed with a simplicity and dignity rarely equaled a sensitivity of conscience, a depth of religious insight, and a sure grasp of the essentials of the Christian faith which makes him

one of the great modern representatives of Christian statesmanship."

Not a member of a church nor a confessor of a creed, Lincoln's link to the Christian faith then lies in his devotion to the Bible. He did speak highly of the Scriptures, saying of them on one occasion: this is "the Great Book. . . the best gift God has given to man. All things desirable for his welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found



Abraham Lincoln cannot be understood without a consideration of his devotion to the Bible.



portrayed in it." The Bible, he declared, is "the best cure for the blues." In a letter to a friend he wrote regarding meditation on the Psalms, "They are the best, for I find in them something for every day of the week." As a youth, he committed many

passages of Scripture to memory, even though he did not then have his own Bible. It was said of Lincoln that he read "few books, but mastered all he read – of which the Bible was chief," and it was the Bible that shaped his character and molded his personal style.

Lincoln's scriptural wit

Biblical language was embedded in his thinking, and this certainly was demonstrated in his communicating. His speeches and letters have been analyzed carefully by historians, with the conclusion that the Old Testament is the most influential both in style and content – especially the major and minor prophets' message of liberty and justice struck a chord with Lincoln. Some have even made a study of his use of parallelism, likening it to the parallelism of Hebrew poetry. Others have studied his wide use of monosyllables in his speeches, even comparing it to the prevalent use of the monosyllabic words in the Psalms of the King James Version!

Biblical references appeared in Lincoln's speaking in a variety of forms. For instance, he would use a Scriptural reference in a humorous way, sometimes responding with a witty quotation of Scripture. He was familiar enough with the Bible to quickly pull out the "appropriate" phrase. In 1864 there was an attempt to form a political party with the sole objective of defeating the Lincoln administration in the next election. Their first meeting in Cleveland was announced with great fanfare, and it was said that thousands would attend. When Lincoln was told later that the feeble group had numbered only 400, he jokingly compared the Cleveland gathering to those in the Cave of Adullam (1 Sam 22:2), where there were a similar number of "malcontents."

Another story is related that an official from the Treasury Department once introduced a delegation of New York bankers to Lincoln, deferentially speaking of their patriotism and commitment to American values. This official concluded his introduction



Statue of a seated Lincoln, deep in contemplation, some 20 feet high.

with what he thought was a suitable text, “Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.” Without hesitation Lincoln replied, “There is another text which might apply, ‘Where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together.’”

He often utilized Scripture to clinch a point in an argument. For example, he had been asked repeatedly to make an official statement saying that he would not interfere with slavery in states where it was acceptable. He responded negatively to these requests, citing the many times he had made public statements on the matter, or had written letters on the same issue expressing his viewpoint. He affirmed, “Those who will not read or heed what I have publicly said would not read or heed a repetition of it. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.”

Less than literal

One Lincoln scholar points out that Lincoln did not feel the need to be “literalistic in application.” By “literalistic” we might imagine that this scholar disparagingly refers to a use of Scripture that considers the original context and purpose of the passage (good Reformed principles of reading the Bible!). It is also pointed out that rationalism was so deeply ingrained in his character that Lincoln tried to interpret the Scriptures “intelligently and in light of accumulated human experience.” Trained as a lawyer, he sought to carefully investigate the veracity of Scripture’s testimony. Indeed, Lincoln famously spoke of taking as much of Scripture as possible on reason, and the rest on faith.

Lincoln did not try to oversimplify his use of Scripture regarding difficult matters he encountered in his presidency. He was confronted with pro-emancipation clergymen who pointed out that he could not deny that the Bible denounced oppression as one of the highest crimes. Indeed, Lincoln was drawn to the events related in the Bible because so often they depict “man’s struggle to be free,” from Egypt, from sin,



Another story is related that an official from the Treasury Department once introduced a delegation of New York bankers to Lincoln, deferentially speaking of their patriotism and commitment to American values. This official concluded his introduction with what he thought was a suitable text, “Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.” Without hesitation Lincoln replied, “There is another text which might apply, ‘Where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together.’”

from persecution. Yet Lincoln maintained that the “plain physical facts” of the case in the United States had to be considered and weighed with reason. Lincoln was aware the Bible does not contain a single overt condemnation of human slavery, but rather depicts the patriarchs as owning slaves, and Ephesians 6:5 as maintaining the same practice. To make his case against slavery, he instead turned to the Biblical teachings on justice and charity, as well as to his understanding of Genesis 1:27 and the creation of man in the image of God. Lincoln defended vehemently that every human being had a glory and dignity that was derived from God the Creator. In his fight for the emancipation of slaves, he combined these principles with the rationalistic maxims of Thomas Jefferson. In other matters too, Lincoln turned to the Bible to find a beginning insight on and metaphors for the social and political problems that faced the nation, which he followed with an application of reason.

He also seriously modified passages from Scripture to gain rhetorical points in his political speeches. The rhetoric of the Second Inaugural Address was heightened with his Scriptural references, as we have

seen. In another instance he alludes to Matthew 16 when speaking of America’s love of liberty: “When the people rise in masses in behalf of the Union and the liberties of their country, truly may it be said, ‘The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.’” Lincoln also proclaimed widely his devotion to the foundational documents of American democracy, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, vowing: “May my right hand forget its cunning and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if ever I prove false to these teachings.” Using Psalm 137, he merely substituted America for Jerusalem in this statement of his patriotism.

Lincoln used Biblical themes in his letters and speeches without so much as a citation. One writer notes that Lincoln did not collect proof texts to support his opinions, and always assumed his hearers were as familiar with the quoted passages as he was. He spoke of “running the race with perseverance” against Senator Douglas for the Republican nomination for the presidential election. He even entitled a major speech in 1858 from the teaching of Christ in Matthew 12 (and parallel passages), “a house divided against itself will not stand.”

He viewed the “House Divided” theme as particularly appropriate to his contemporary situation, for a debate was raging in the Union at that time over the question of slavery in new states and colonies. This debate would play a part in the ultimate division of his country, the Civil War. Lincoln felt that slavery must be contained in its traditional home in the Southern states, where he hoped it would slowly die out. He wanted to bar slavery from the new western states, saying, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. This government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. It will become all one thing, or all the other.”

Two days after the Confederate side surrendered to end the Civil War, and a few days before he would be assassinated, Lincoln gave thanks to God in his last public address. Alluding to the well-known Doxology he said, “The surrender give[s] hope of a righteous and speedy peace whose joyous expression can not be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He from whom all blessings flow, must not be forgotten.”

Concluding thoughts

Lincoln is given an honored place in American history, for he guided the nation into consolidation even as it expanded and also had to deal with the divisive issue of slavery. Most historians agree that Abraham Lincoln cannot be understood without a consideration of his devotion to the Bible. Most also recognize that he felt that the Bible in some way contained the will of God for the nation.

Lincoln is to be admired for his obvious love of Scripture – but is it a proper love and regard when Scripture is not treated according to the intention of the Holy Spirit? It is clear that Lincoln was far from “literalistic” in his use of Scripture, but rather he misused, even abused Scripture, shaping it to fit his own situation and purpose, without so much as consideration of the original context.

Not wanting to speculate on the veracity of Lincoln’s faith, I would rather



Lincoln out in the field with his soldiers.

move from his time to our own for some “application.” We who live in the years of the so-called Common Era (we are told it’s not *Anno Domini* any longer) might long for the days when citing Scripture was acceptable in the public square. While a sincere Christian appeal to Scripture is seen by our society as irrelevant and anachronistic, there are those who still use the Scriptures for their own purposes, and with far less elevated or dignified applications than Abraham Lincoln made. The general recognizability of Scripture has



WWF wrestler named (Stone Cold) Steve Austin has “Austin 3:16”



made it susceptible to many blasphemous abuses. A recent advertisement for some MP3 technology spoke of “making music in your image.” A film last year entitled “Original Sin” had as its tagline, “Lead us into temptation.” There is also a WWF wrestler named (Stone Cold) Steve Austin who has “Austin 3:16” as his trademark. More examples could be given. . . Faced with these

attacks, we must be ready to defend the truth and holiness of the Bible. This is the Word of God being trampled!

It is sad to say, but even Christians sometimes use Scripture in a careless and improper way: a busy Christian might jokingly complain about his packed schedule with the words of the LORD’s judgment in Isaiah, “No rest for the wicked!” When we want to shift the blame from ourselves we might jestingly repeat those words of Adam, “The woman made me do it!” When asked of someone’s whereabouts, how often don’t the guilty words of Cain cross our lips, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Let us watch our own treatment of the Scriptures in our speaking and thinking, remembering their power and sanctity. Keeping Reformed principles of Scripture study in mind, let us all be busy with the Scriptures – seeing clearly how the Word does relate to all of life in God’s service.

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**Grace and peace to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come,
and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness,
the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**

One of the Kings

by Christine Farenhorst

Born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 5, 1638, the cherub-faced baby was regarded as somewhat of a miracle as his parents, Louis Bourbon, also known as the thirteenth, and Anne of Austria, had been married twenty-three years when he arrived. Perhaps it set the stage for spoiling a child who would later be known as the Sun King.

The boy, who became the fourteenth Louis, lived a life which we can detail to a great extent since much has been recorded about him. At the age of two, for example, he showed a pronounced dislike for his father, ate with his fingers and was fond of peas. As he grew, he had a particular aversion for two things: baths and books. In early manhood, this fourteenth Louis began to wear six inch heels to make him appear taller than his five foot four height; he also generally changed his clothes three times a day (no wonder, what with his aversion for baths!); and, because father Louis and mother Anne did not employ the Biblical tactics for shepherding a child's heart, he metamorphosed into the epitome of selfishness.

Five-year-old king

This fourteenth Louis child, indulged by all, ascended to the throne of France at the tender age of five, his mother being regent during his minority. Cardinal Jules Mazarin cared for the administration of the kingdom and when he died early on in

Louis' reign, he left the young boy king the wealthiest, most powerful ruler in Europe, (humanly speaking, that is).

Louis chose his ministers with care. He made sure they were ordinary men, without any noble blood, so that they would have no claims to grandeur by birth. This way they were grateful to him for whatever position he gave them. But if he did appoint a wealthy person to a post, that person had to pay through the nose for it. In 1671, for example, when he appointed a Marquis as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Louis advised him that it would cost 800,000 livres. The king's appointments, usually unsought, were never refused. Royal wrath was known to fine, imprison and execute.

Louis XIV had a great deal of power. He was responsible for censorship of books and he regulated what was taught at the university of Paris; he silenced Parliament; he created the post of Police Lieutenant in 1667, (the Lieutenant had broad powers in matters of crime, public order and censorship, employing a vast network of spies throughout France); he also had a "Black Cabinet," men who prepared for him a weekly digest of what was being said about him in private correspondence, (a remark written in jest about king or country could well lead to imprisonment in the Bastille). It was well understood that Louis, also known as



the fourteenth, allowed praise but brooked no criticism.

Little compassion beat in Louis' royal heart. When someone called attention to the hunger misery in the country during the famine winter of 1709, he said ". . .and what if thousands of those scoundrels die, since they are useful for nothing. Would France be less France?"

The court of the latter half of the 1600s and the early part of the 1700s was one of extravagance. Money was the glue that held it together. Louis built Versailles, erected a castle for a mistress here, and gave a commission to a favorite there. There were tremendous payoffs and kickbacks. Letters conferring nobility at a price were revoked nine times during his reign and the holders had to buy new ones. Louis himself was astonished by the success of his dishonest measures.

“Who will buy these?” he asked his Minister of Finance, who had created the new offices. “Your Majesty ignores one of the finest prerogatives of the King of France,” replied the Minister, “which is that when a king creates an office, God instantly creates a fool to buy it.”

Everything the king did was public news. When Louis traveled to church to pray, the nobility formed a vast circle at the foot of the altar, stood with their backs to the priest and looked only at the king. They visually adored him. When Louis went to

bed, people watched him. It was considered a privilege and you could buy your way to bedtime. Courtiers called “petite entrées” eyed him while he defecated on his chaise percée, decorated with mother-of-pearl landscapes.

A “pious” adulterer

The king’s mistress, Madame de Maintenon, was a rather fanatical member of the Roman Catholic Church. She infused him with a hypocritical piety and in 1682 an assembly of priests pressed the king to begin persecution of the Huguenots in earnest.



When Louis went to bed, people watched him.



From that time on until his death in 1715, Louis XIV initiated horribly repressive measures against the Protestants. He prohibited

them from holding synods; he forbade Huguenot women to be midwives; he permitted Huguenot children to be taken from their parents at the age of seven to be raised as Catholics elsewhere; he did not allow French people to give charity to Huguenots who were ill or poor; he did not permit Huguenots to have Catholic servants; he did not allow Huguenot lawyers, doctors, clerks, surgeons, apothecaries, printers and librarians to practice their professions; and he revoked the Edict of Nantes. (It’s strange to think that measures adopted by Louis XIV were later copied by Hitler in the Nuremberg Decrees for the Protection of Blood, “Blutschutzgesetz.”) Dragoons sacked towns, tortured families, hung men and women by their feet, burned them over wet hay, and threw them into wells. It’s no wonder that some 200,000 to 300,000 fled to friendlier countries.

But God is, after all, the Ruler of the kings on the earth. Inadvertently Louis weakened the sick monarchy. The forced emigrations of hundreds of thousands of professional subjects deprived the French of a good labor force. Once outside of France many of these Huguenots joined armies and navies in the wars against France. Louis also alienated the Protestant powers of Europe by whom he was infamously (but correctly) regarded as a monster. Louis reigned a phenomenal 72 years, during thirty-one of which he was at war with the rest of Europe. Strain of war was hard on the economy. Forgotten taxes reappeared and new ones were made. He was not loved even though he left France with more territory and was responsible for the architecture on the Tuileries, the Place des Victoires, the Observatoire, the Val de Grace Church and the Champs Elysées and the Louvre Colonnade.

An impressive king, humanly speaking

Louis XIV died on September 1, 1715. He had reigned long, humanly speaking;



Louis built the spectacular, the extravagant, the simply ostentatious Palace of Versailles.

had presided over a magnificent court, humanly speaking; had achieved intellectual and artistic success, humanly speaking; and had won a number of military battles, humanly speaking. He also left behind unrivaled extravagance and monetary bankruptcy.

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Measures adopted by Louis XIV were later copied by Hitler.

.....

The month prior to his death, Louis still walked through his well-tended garden on his high heels, supervising placement of marble statues. He ate overly much at dinners and had no lack of courtiers who fawned over him. The sciatica which hit him rather suddenly, put him into bed and a dozen or so lackeys stood at his bedside as he moaned, groaned and complained. These last days, as all his other days, were public. Doctors purged him, bled him and had him take baths in silver bathtubs filled with asses' milk mixed with Burgundy wine. Italian musicians played soothing motets as he soaked. The doctors ignored his real physical problem, a gangrenous leg, and the king himself was rather dubious as he sat in his bath.

"Do you really think this will help me?" he asked his physicians.

Having some inkling of impending death, he sent for and pedantically spoke to his priest confessor, sadly declaring that he was not suffering enough for the expiation of his sins. As he sat in a wheelchair, his gangrenous leg on a stool, he also addressed the many cardinals who had swarmed to his bedside. He vehemently avowed that the responsibility for his religious policies was theirs and that his conscience was clear before God since he had only followed their orders.

The end of Louis

Louis had access to the law and the prophets. More than that, he had access to Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of Old Testament law and prophecy. Had he repented, would he have been forgiven even in his gangrenous old age? Remember Manasseh – Manasseh who had the longest reign of any of the kings of Judah (55 years) and who did evil in the eyes of the Lord most of his reign.

"The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God." (II Chron 33:10-13)


On August 27, 1715, two weeks after becoming ill, Maréchal, the royal surgeon, operated on Louis' gangrenous leg.

"Ah, Maréchal, how you are hurting me!" he cried and four days later, surgery notwithstanding, he was dead.

Yes, as dead as the dry bones mentioned in Ezekiel, notwithstanding silver bathtubs and Burgundy wine, was he who had said he had been placed on the throne directly by God "to give examples to others and not to receive them."

The day after he died, Maréchal opened the body, removed the heart and intestines and performed an autopsy. The body was then embalmed and placed in a lead casket. The lead casket was then placed in a thick oak coffin and sealed with iron bands. A copper plate nailed to the oak coffin read: "This is the body of the very high and very powerful prince Louis XIV, called the great, of the family of the house of Bourbon, King of France and

Navarre, deceased in Versailles the first of September 1715 at the age of 77 years, and born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, September 5, 1638. He reigned 72 years, 3 months and 18 days."

All this falderal did not keep Louis, also known as the fourteenth, from his appointment with the Ruler of the kings of the earth, also known as the Alpha and Omega. His time on the earth had been a mere royal drop in the bucket when weighed against God's eternity. 

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SOMETIMES YOU *DON'T* TURN THE OTHER CHEEK: Self-Defence is Biblical

by Michael Wagner

You're worshipping in church when suddenly you hear gunfire and explosions as terrorists burst into the service, mercilessly killing anyone they can. A frightful prospect but also (thankfully) an unlikely event in North America. In some other countries, however, it's a realistic possibility. What can a Christian do in such a circumstance? Would it be wrong to fight back? Are we to "turn the other cheek" when threatened by physical harm or death? For some Christians these are not just theoretical questions.

One country where good people continue to face the realistic threat of violence is South Africa. For many years, until the overthrow of Apartheid in the mid-1990s, there was plenty of terrorist activity in that country. The terrorists may now be gone, but South Africa currently suffers from the highest murder rate in the world. We need to pray for our brothers and sisters there.

The St. James Massacre

During the political struggle of the early 1990s, St. James Church in Kenilworth, South Africa was attacked by terrorists of the Azanian People's Liberation Army. They burst into a worship service throwing grenades and shooting automatic weapons. One church member, Charl van Wyk, pulled out the revolver he frequently carried and shot back at the terrorists, wounding one of them. The terrorists subsequently left, speeding away in a car, but not before killing eleven people and wounding dozens of others. Did van Wyk do the right thing? Were his actions Biblical?

Recently van Wyk wrote a book about the "St James Massacre," and the Biblical case for self-defense entitled, *Shooting Back: The Right and Duty of Self-Defence* (Cape Town, South Africa: Christian Liberty Books, 2001). He has no regrets about defending his church during the terrorist attack, and justifiably so; "Both the Old and New Testaments teach individual self-defence, even if it means taking the assailant's life in certain circumstances" (p. 71). Others, however, were critical of van Wyk.

Defense vs. revenge

Perhaps the best-known critic was Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a liberal churchman and famous anti-Apartheid

activist. Tutu said that Christians should not use the same methods as the terrorists, apparently referring to the use of firearms. He then quoted the verse "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord." Tutu had failed to make a crucial distinction, as van Wyk points out. "The Archbishop did not differentiate between 'defense of the innocent' and 'taking of revenge.' I had tried to protect innocent brothers and sisters in Christ from murderers and not taken revenge by following the terrorists and killing them days later" (p. 46).

This is an important point. It is true that Christians are not to take revenge. The desire for revenge is a sinful attitude. However, defending innocent people from violence is an entirely different matter than revenge. Van Wyk was not shooting at the terrorists to get "revenge" for what they were doing, but to prevent the evil they were doing. Once they were gone, he began helping the wounded victims of the attack. If he was after revenge, he would have tried to hunt down the terrorists. Scripturally, it was the civil authorities' job to locate the terrorists and bring them to justice.

A verse frequently used to justify pacifism is Matthew 5:39, "But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (ESV). Pacifists argue that this statement from Jesus shows we cannot use force to resist force. But their interpretation of this text is wrong. "The Sermon on the Mount, from which this passage is taken, deals with righteous personal conduct. In our passage, Christ is clearing up a confusion



that had led people to think that conduct proper for the civil government – that is, taking vengeance – was also proper for an individual” (p. 69). Christians are not to seek revenge for wrongs done to them. If a crime has been committed, that is for the government to deal with. However, “Resisting an attack is not to be confused with taking vengeance. . . Private vengeance means one would stalk down a criminal after one’s life is no longer in danger as opposed to defending oneself during an attack” (p. 72).



Van Wyk was not shooting at the terrorists to get “revenge.”



Furthermore, it’s important to note that Matt. 5:39 is not talking about a situation where someone’s life or physical well being is in danger. The “slap” spoken about is a personal insult rather than a genuine violent threat. Robert Morey, in his book *When Is It Right to Fight?* (Bethany House Publishers, 1985) makes this clear: “Jesus specifically referred to the right cheek as being slapped instead of the left cheek because the slap of the right cheek by the back of the left hand was a personal insult and not an act of violence done in the context of war. Slapping the right cheek was not a life-threatening attack. It was a personal insult, like spitting in someone’s face” (p. 45). Thus offering the left cheek as a target for an additional slap is an act of humility and self-sacrifice, demonstrating that the Christian bears no ill will towards the other person. Pacifism in the face of attack is not the message of Matthew 5:39.

A thief at night

There is explicit Scriptural warrant for using force in self-defense. “If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him,

but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him” (Ex 22:2-3a, ESV). Van Wyk notes, “One conclusion which can be drawn from this is that a threat to our life is to be met with lethal force. During the day, presumably because we can recognize and later apprehend the thief if he escapes, we are not to kill him in non life-threatening circumstances” (p. 71).

If someone breaks into your house, you may defend yourself and your family. In fact, if you are the father/head-of-the-house, it can be argued that you have a positive duty to defend your family from physical harm. 1 Timothy 5:8 states, “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (ESV). This verse refers to providing the necessities of life (food, clothing, etc.) for family members, and it is not unreasonable to see physical security as one of those necessities. If your child is being assaulted by a criminal, are you supposed to “turn the other cheek” and thus allow the attack to continue? Those who would answer “yes” to that question have clearly failed to understand the Scriptures. They would have to condemn Nehemiah’s admonition to God’s people, “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes” (Nehemiah 4:14, ESV).

Biblical Christianity is not a violent religion. The Gospel is not to be propagated by force. But men are sinful, and sometimes force is necessary to restrain or punish evildoers. God has established civil government and given it the power of “the sword” for resisting and punishing such people (Romans 13:1-7). Private citizens may also use force against attackers if their personal safety, or the physical safety of other innocent people, is in danger. It was this principle that animated Charl van Wyk when his church was attacked. He subsequently received a special commendation from the South African Police which noted that, “His action in pursuing the suspects

on foot and returning fire prevented further loss of life” (p. 99). Van Wyk likely saved the lives of other people in church by shooting back at the terrorists. In this way he also “loved his enemies” by preventing the terrorists from heaping further judgment upon themselves through the murder of additional innocent people.

A true fighting hero

Charl van Wyk is truly a hero, but his practice of carrying a weapon to church is not necessary in countries like Canada where violent attacks on church services are unknown. As he notes, the situation was different in his country. “Many people could not understand why I would carry a firearm into a church service, but I argued that this was a particularly dangerous time in South Africa” (p. 25). He actually didn’t normally carry a weapon until after an incident where the vehicle he was driving was attacked by a brick-throwing mob (pp. 64-65). Although all countries experience violent crime, in relatively safe countries such as Canada carrying a firearm in public is probably not a good idea.



Carrying a weapon to church is not necessary in countries like Canada. . . .



The main point, however, is that self-defense is a Biblical principle. The kind of pacifism which holds that all use of force under all circumstances is wrong cannot be justified Scripturally. Of course, there are situations where it would be wiser to forego self-defense. If someone is being mugged it may be safer for the victim to give the robber the money he wants rather than resist him. Less physical harm would be incurred that way. But in situations like that faced by Charl van Wyk, force can Scripturally be used to resist evil.





Barbarians At Our Door

Our culture is collapsing but are Christians aware of what is happening?

by Johan D. Tangelder

“The barbarians are coming!” The list of rough, uncivilized, and uncultured barbarians who have come and gone is a long one. Wherever they went, they instilled fear and left a path of destruction. A well-known example from history is the sacking of Rome by the Goths and Vandals in the fifth century of the Christian era. Why did mighty Rome fall into the hands of those barbarians? Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), one of the great historians of the twentieth century, argued that internal rather than external factors were cause for its downfall. The decline and fall of Rome did not come overnight. Of course, we think of Nero, the sensational and pathological emperor and music artist, who fiddled while his city was burning. But he was only a symptom of the long process of the vulgarization of the Roman governing class. In his book *City of God*, Augustine responded to the widely asked question: why have things gone so disastrously wrong with the empire ever since it became Christian? Augustine pointed out that the earlier paganism, too, had failed to provide a defense against catastrophe.

Even though paganism had failed Rome, an enormous stress was placed on reviving paganism, the faith it was said, that had made Rome great. But Rome fell to its external enemies because of the corruption of its morals, the manifold internal conflicts, the many civil wars disputing the imperial succession, the resentment at the ever increasing tax load and compulsory labor.

But barbarians are not merely factors in ancient history. It is commonly said that the modern world is reverting to paganism. It is not necessary to chronicle in detail the twentieth century’s horrendous record of evil, committed on a scale that is beyond human capacity to fully comprehend it. Germany’s Nazi regime was an embodiment of barbarism and a revival of raw paganism. Hitler’s crude and debased system of state propaganda, the mass enslavement of minds, the exaltation of the state, people’s courts composed of ardent Nazis making mockery of justice, and concentration camps which dotted Germany’s landscape coerced and cowed millions of Germans into submission to the power of his totalitarian and

anti-Christ rule. Even many Catholic priests and Protestant pastors fell under the ban of this new pagan religion, the worship of Germany under the symbols of the old gods of Nordic paganism.

Blind to barbarism

But if the twentieth century witnessed the revival of paganism, why do some claim that the twenty-first century may become even more pagan? Paganism seems even more entrenched today, holding a firm grip on society. In the 1970s, Dr. Carl F.H. Henry made the arresting claim: “The Barbarians Are Coming” and they threaten to undermine the foundations of civilization. Barbarians, argued Henry, had already begun to invade the beleaguered civilization of the West. The philosopher Alasdair C. MacIntyre records the advent of a “new dark ages” – the collapse of the high traditions of Western civilization. He claims: “The Barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament.”

Who are these modern barbarians? They are atheistic secularists and they are in the driver's seat of our Western culture. Solzhenitsyn pointed to the core cause of paganization. "If I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the *entire* twentieth century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: 'Men have forgotten God.'" In the 1980s the epitome of self-sufficiency was Bart Simpson praying at his network-created cartoon dinner table, "Dear God, we pay for all this ourselves, so thanks for nothing." No movement in the twentieth century has reflected greater numerical growth than secularism. It has choked the life of the church in Western Europe while atheistic Marxism has strangled the church in Eastern Europe. Most Europeans have a family history form of Christianity but now, like the prodigal son, have turned away. Although in the United States evangelical Christianity is vibrant, secularism has captured education and politics. Lesslie Newbigin said of Western society that "the most obvious fact that distinguishes our culture from all that have preceded is that it is – in its public philosophy – atheist." The great majority of decision makers in the Western world live, talk, and act as though God does not exist. God is sometimes useful as a political ally, but when the chips are down you do not find the leaders of the West – with a few exceptions – resorting to Him for advice and help. An example of such leadership is Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chretien. It has been reported that he boasted that it was his personal decision to exclude "priests" and all mention of faith from the memorial service on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for the September 11 attack on America and its victims. He usually regards churches as little more than lobby groups. But secularist atheism makes spiritual death unavoidable in this

life and in the next. My concern is this: Do we, as Christians, clearly understand the tragic drift of our culture?

THE PROBLEM

1. Man on the throne

"Man is the measure of all things," we are told reassuringly by the secular humanists. He declares himself independent of God on the basis of reason and his faith in the sciences. He kneels before himself and his own reason. He says, "I cannot know, hence I cannot trust in, anything that is beyond what I can think." The little "I" has now become the arbiter of all that is but also of what ought to be. No prophet, or tradition, or religion knows better than the individual what the individual's good is.



Decision makers in the Western world live, talk, and act as though God does not exist.



In other words the individual is now on the throne, replacing God. He says, "No deity will save me, I must save myself." He has replaced the Ten Commandments with the single command: "Be good to yourself." In other words, the source of salvation and the object of worship are one. Here then is the root cause of all our modern troubles. Man has liberated himself from God and all moral absolutes. He relies on his own personal experience instead of God's law when weighing issues of right and wrong. He does what is right in his own eyes. His pursuit of happiness and quest for self-fulfillment become substitutes for virtue. But when God is declared dead, pagan idols are revived. Man cannot

live in a spiritual vacuum. In his plight he seeks refuge in his own idolized image. John Calvin, the great Reformer, said of people of his time that they were nothing other than factories of idols. Today the factories of idols are working overtime. Basic to idolatry then is the glorification of man. This idolatry of self makes him feel taller than he really is. And this self-inflation needs to be fed continually. He does not want to be the image bearer of God (Gen 1:27). He desires to be sovereign, his own lawgiver, and the creator of his own future. But there is nothing new under the sun. Satan already seduced Adam and Eve in paradise to idolatry (Gen 3:4). Their deepest motif was their pride, doing their own will instead of obeying their Creator. The human inclination for self-worship is behind the biblical injunctions against pride. Tyre was struck down "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god'" (Ezek 28:2).

In this brave new world moral relativism has become the last "moral" absolute and the liberty of self-expression the essence of progress. As a video storeowner in the US who was prosecuted for violating pornography laws stated, "I feel like I'm fighting for America. I feel like I'm fighting for our rights as Americans. That's what I feel like." But idols cannot save. They are deaf and dumb. They are unable to offer a lamp to our feet and a guide upon our path (cf. Ps 119:105). A society which cuts itself off from God and is morally adrift loses its sense of security and safety. In 1994, the Jewish medical educator David C. Stolinsky lamented the loss of the Christian values that dominated America in the 1950s. "The reason we fear to go out after dark is not that we may be set upon by bands of evangelicals and forced to read the New Testament," he said, "but that we may be set upon by gangs of feral (wild and savage) young people who have been

taught that nothing is superior to their own needs or feelings.”

2. The loss of shame

Another evidence of the deepening secular inroads is the loss of shame. In the past people would have a sense of shame if they did not take seriously questions of life and death, or responsibility and judgment, heaven and hell. They had a Christian

heritage and believed that God would hold them accountable for their actions.

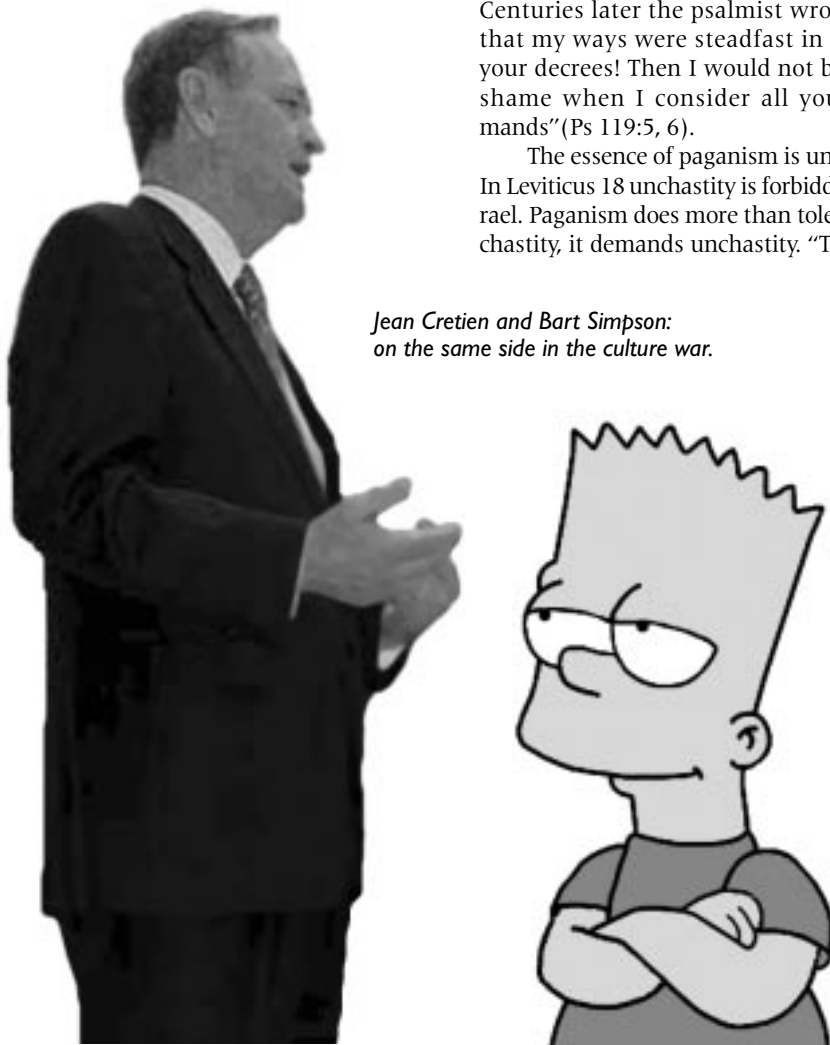
In paradise Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with one another and with God. They lived in an atmosphere of trust and truth. They were “both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen 2:25). Their nakedness and vulnerability posed no threat. When they disobeyed God, the trust was broken. They lost their innocence. They saw their nakedness, looked for cover and protection. In Adam’s words, “I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Gen 3:10). Centuries later the psalmist wrote, “Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands” (Ps 119:5, 6).

The essence of paganism is unchastity. In Leviticus 18 unchastity is forbidden to Israel. Paganism does more than tolerate unchastity, it demands unchastity. “The irony

of shame,” writes Rodney Clapp, “is that hiding and covering our vulnerability only increases it. The higher our lies are stacked, the more likely they are to topple. The games we play grow so complex that we are bound to slip up. Life for ashamed people who cannot admit shame is a complicated and tense affair.”

The repaganization of the Western world is accompanied by a frightening reappearance of pagan sexuality. The ancient Greek goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic love, has made a big comeback in the last generation or two. She used to be worshipped openly in the ancient world, either under that name or under her Latin name, Venus. Sexuality as such is not sinful, of course. It gives joy and delight, sustains the bond of husband and wife, and propagates the human race. But worship sexuality and one becomes its slave, unable to resist its demands, even when they impinge on the freedom and happiness of others. Our “liberal” culture has even made sexuality a commercial commodity. Television and the print media pander to the lower instincts and emotions. They make erotic relations dramatically attractive.

*Jean Cretien and Bart Simpson:
on the same side in the culture war.*



.....

***Do we, as Christians,
clearly understand the
tragic drift of our
culture?***

.....

TV features R-rated programs with all their gore and foul language. Taboos continue to be broken in pursuit of audiences. “Permissive morality” and “sexual revolution” are now more than a slogan from the 1960s, they are now manifestos of liberation from Christian morality. But Christians should not be surprised. When there is no longer a fixed moral reference point by which to

judge behavior, everything become permissible, norms a delusion, and self-discipline without purpose. As Raymond Aron said: "That God is dead means not just 'Everything is permitted' but also, and especially, 'Everything is possible.'"

The idolatrous worship of sex is costly. The consequences of this revival of paganism are seen in the increasing rejection of monogamous marriage, the ready accommodation of divorce, the breakup of families, kids who have kids, the vanishing father, abortion, child abuse, the drug culture, high-pressured hard-nosed materialism, the legitimization of homosexuality and of lesbianism as alternative lifestyles. This pagan immorality has room for a great variety of lifestyles, but it is intolerant of Christian standards. Some years ago radical feminists and homosexuals united to interrupt the celebration of the Roman Catholic mass inside St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York in order to assert their right to abort their unborn children and to follow their sexual orientation. In Canada a growing anti-Christian movement makes it difficult for Christians who believe in absolute standards of morality and are not quiet about their convictions. Mrs. Janet Epp Buckingham, a lawyer and chair of the Social Action Committee for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada notes that current Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission policies have more than once been used to block Christian programs because of comments on homosexuality. "Christians can no longer be complacent," she warns. "There is an ongoing attempt to silence everyone who believes in an absolute morality."

OUR RESPONSE:

A light in the darkness

How should Christians react to the revival of paganism? We should not succumb to egocentric despair. On the one hand, for the modern pagan the world is meaningless; where death ends all. It offers no hope

for a better future. On the other hand, the Bible gives substance to hope. Christians are children of the Light, Jesus Christ. Our hope is in the Lord, Who bore our shame on the cross. As Bach's hymn puts it so well:

O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and *shame* weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns your only crown. O sacred head, what glory and blessing you have known! Yet, though despised and gory, I claim you as my own.

This Jesus is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6). He broke the power of evil (Col 2:15). He is at once the Lord of the future and the Sovereign of the present. And He will return in triumph over His foes. The Bible reminds us that idols are merely a projection of the mind of man. They are worthless things (1 Cor 10:19, 20). But we cannot be indifferent. We are warned to flee from idolatry (1 Cor 10:14) and to be "on watch against false gods" (1 John 5:21).

The Lord mandated the Church to call the world back to God, to repentance, conversion, and a radical change. The Western world does not need a "make us feel good" gospel. The call for repentance is desperately needed. Why? Because repentance includes the repudiation of idolatry and the recognition of God. It is a "turn-about" of the entire human being. "We have so bedeviled the world," says Solzhenitzyn, "brought it so close to self-destruction, that repentance is now a matter of life and death – not for the sake of a life beyond the grave. . . but for the sake of our life here and now and our very survival on this earth. . .

We can say without suspicion of overstatement that without repentance it is any case doubtful if we can survive."

The real arena in which we are to work and witness and win others for the Lord and His Church is this dark world. Consequently, if we don't obey the Great Commission in word and deed we have ceased to be light and salt. This calls for earnest prayer, spiritual vitality, and a burden for the lost. Jesus said that if we are not shamed of Him before man, He will not be ashamed of us before the Father (Mark 8:38). The early Christians were subversives, refusing to conform to the norms of their surroundings. Their practical demonstration of the Gospel was probably the single greatest cause of the rapid spread of Christianity. "See how these Christians love one another" was not irony. Their love expressed itself in care for the poor, for widows and orphans, in visits to persecuted Christians in prisons or condemned to the living death of labor in the mines, and in social action in time of calamity, famine, earthquakes, pestilence, or war. The distribution of alms was not confined to believers. Christians taught the sanctity of marriage. The Christian sex ethic differed from the conventional standards of pagan society in that it regarded unchastity in a husband as no less a serious breach of loyalty and trust than unfaithfulness in a wife. The early Christians lived out the Gospel in their pagan society. May we, 21st century Christians, do likewise in our repaganized Western world.



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Short & Simple

Your Questions Answered

Millennialism Explained

Q.

I've been told my church is Amillennialist. What does that mean?

A.

This question is short and simple, but unfortunately the answer is somewhat complex, although I'll try to be clear and to the point. Before you can understand "Amillennialism" you need to understand Millennialism in general. Millennialism is a belief concerning the *future* period of glory for Christ and His church on this present earth. The term "Millennialism" is derived from the Latin word "*mille*" meaning, "1000." At some point, before the final end of all things, Christ will reign with His church for 1000 years on the earth as we now know it. Millennialism is based on a very literal interpretation of one key text of Scripture, namely Revelation 20 (especially vs. 4-10).

Premillennialism

There are two basic forms of Millennialism: *Premillennialism* and *Postmillennialism*. The "pre" (i.e. "before") and the "post" ("after") simply refer to the *timing* of Christ's return (His second advent), that is, either *before* or *after* the 1000 year period of glory. By far the more popular of the two, Premillennialism teaches that Christ will *first* come back and *then* proceed to establish a 1000-year reign of peace on the earth.

There are a number of versions in vogue but a very popular one (often called Dispensational Premillennialism) includes the idea of the "Rapture"¹ as follows: at any time Christ will return and meet His saints in the air. These saints will be comprised of all believers at that time, living or dead. The dead will be raised up and the living transformed, both into glorified bodies. Together they will be caught up or "raptured" instantly to meet Christ in the air and be with Him forever. This rapture

of believers will leave behind all unconverted people in a moment of time.

Furthermore, Premillennialists believe that after the rapture follows a seven-year period where Christ and His church retreat to heaven. These seven years are known as the period of *Tribulation*. Two things will occur during the Tribulation:

1. From heaven, Christ will again deal with the Jewish people directly and effect mass conversions among them.
2. However, at the same time and with increasing oppression the Antichrist will reign over the earth, hence the term, "Tribulation."

At the end of seven years, Christ will return from heaven once more together with His church. He will proceed to destroy the Antichrist, bind Satan, and set up an earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem to rule the nations for 1000 years (the millennium). This will be a time of great peace and joy for the church. At the end of 1000 years, Satan will be loosed for a short time, attempt to destroy the church, but will himself once and for all be cast

Revelation 20:4-10 – The thousand year reign

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.



into the lake of burning fire. Then Christ and all His people will enter their eternal state on the new heaven and new earth.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism has many similar features but places events in a different order. The millennium in view here is not so much a strict 1000-year period, but an *era* wherein Christ will reign from heaven through His church over this present earth. Christ's second coming will occur *after* (i.e. post) this "millennium." This millennium will thus be brought about by the gradual spread of the gospel and the increased Christianization of the world. Here there is no future period of tribulation or apostasy but a steady increase in Christ's influence and rule over the nations. Once this "golden era" of the church has come to an end, then Christ will return, usher in the final judgment and bring His church into eternal bliss on the new heaven and new earth.

Amillennialism

So, what now is Amillennialism? The term "Amillennialism" literally means "no millennialism" and intends to out-rightly deny the positions of both "pre" and "post" millennialism. Still, the term is somewhat misleading, for Amil-

lennialists *do* believe in the 1000-year reign of Christ, but not in the literalistic manner of the others. Though there is some disagreement in minor details, proponents teach that the millennial reign of Christ began at His ascension into heaven and continues presently. Christ is *currently* King in heaven, and those who have died in the Lord currently rule together with Him. Satan is thus presently bound by the power of Christ so as not to deceive the nations with his lies any longer, as he had previously been allowed to do. To be sure, the Devil is still active and influential, but his previous dominance is curtailed for a time, namely for the "millennium." This allows the gospel to spread to all nations and through it Christ powerfully gathers in the elect of His Father by the power of His Spirit.


The church during these "last days" remains, even while expanding, a suffering church, constantly afflicted by the devil, the unbelieving world, and internal strife. This affliction becomes greater toward the end of Christ's millennium as Satan is "loosed" for a short time, the time when the spirit of the Antichrist and the Man of Lawlessness gain increasing authority. Following this temporary increase in Satan's power and his persecution of the church, Christ will physically return on

the clouds of heaven and put a permanent end to Satan and his allies. This will be the time of the final judgment when all of God's enemies will be thrown into the burning lake of fire. At the same time, all of God's elect will be gathered unto Himself to live forever with their God on the new heaven and the new earth.²

By and large Reformed churches have historically taken this "Amillennialist" position. Christ's millennial reign is *now*, not future. This is the consistent teaching of the Bible clearly understood by the three ancient ecumenical creeds and as well the Reformed confessions (see for example, Belgic Confession, Art. 26, 37; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1, 18, 19, 22, 48).

¹ The rapture has been recently popularized in a series of novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins called "The Left-Behind" series.

² For a more comprehensive overview of the Millennialist views from a Reformed standpoint, see Tj. Boersma, "A Millennial Reign, But How?" in *Clarion*, Year-End Issue, 1999, p. 585-588.

Peter H. Holtvliuwer is a minister in the Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church in B.C. 

Got questions you want answered?

Send them to the Short and Simple column and we'll do our best to track down experts to answer your queries.

You can send your questions via e-mail, or regular postal mail to:

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Tidbits relevant, and not so, to Christian life

by Jon Dykstra

.....
But they were white in my picture Bible!

In his novel *Dominion* Randy Alcorn makes the case that Adam and Eve were black. His reasoning is simple: two black parents can produce offspring with a wide variety of skin tones – one child may be very dark and another might be essentially white – but two white parents will never produce black offspring. So if Adam and Eve were white, as they are portrayed in many Picture Bibles, then where did black people come from? But if they were black, then it is easy to account for all the various skin colors in the world.

If true, this would mean all of us have black ancestors. . . including all the white supremacists in the world.

.....
Just the facts ma'am

Two January 24 headlines:
"Chretien supports U.S. push for war" – *Toronto Star*
"PM to Bush: Hold off on war" – *The Globe and Mail*

.....
Feeling subversive?

Jesus' birth was the turning point in history and that fact is acknowledged in the very way we date things. The date as I write this is Jan 25, 2003 AD – that AD stands for "anno Domini" which is Latin for "the year of our Lord." And BC is an abbreviation for "before Christ."

But some don't want to acknowledge Christ's pivotal role in history so there is a movement afoot to replace AD and BC with CE and BCE. These two new

abbreviations are free of any references to Christ – the CE stands for "Common Era" while BCE stands for "Before the Common Era."

Rather than complain at this change I would suggest that Christians nip it in the bud. The next time you see anything dated with a CE just read it aloud as "Christian Era" and read BCE as "Before the Christian Era." Just because these abbreviations are meant to be free of any references to Christ doesn't mean we have to refer to them that way. So let's just change the meaning to suit us, and honor God.



.....
Quote of the month

"The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death."

Bertrand Russell, renowned atheist reflecting on how pitiful life is without God.

.....
Real headlines

- Local high school dropouts cut in half
- Eye drops off shelf
- Iraqi head seeks arms

British left waffles on Falkland Islands

Kids make nutritious snacks

Infertility unlikely to be passed on

Blind woman gets kidney from dad she hasn't seen in years

Stolen paintings found by tree

Source: *Edmonton Journal* January 19, 2003

.....
News bites

The February issue of *Evangelicals Now* reports that schools in Britain have been banned from using any form of physical correction on students, even if parents give permission. A number of Christian schools appealed the ban, but lost. . . .

Libya was elected chair of the United Nation's Human Rights Commission on January 20 despite the fact the nation is still under UN sanctions for its role in the 1988 Lockerbie airliner bombing, which killed 271. Only Canada, the US and Guatemala voted against Libya, while Australia either abstained or voted for Libya in the secret ballot. . . .

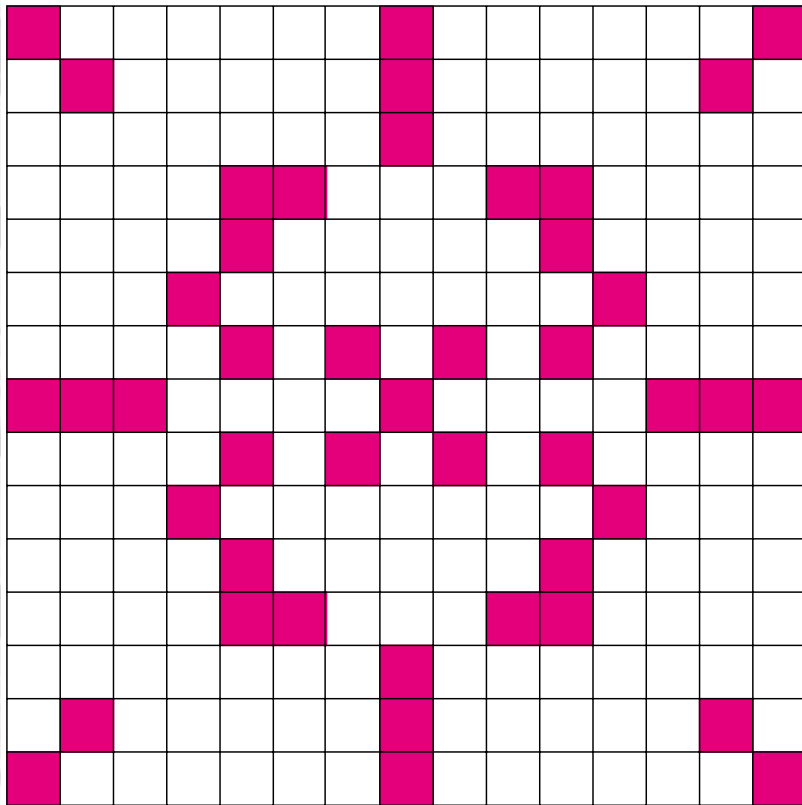
The news story of the month has to be Clonaid's assertion that it has successfully cloned a human being. Despite its refusal to offer any proof Clonaid has been the subject of innumerable articles in newspapers around the world. The *New York Times*, for example, featured 16 articles on Clonaid from December 25 – January 25. These articles amounted to more than 11,000 words, or approximately one half of a *Reformed Perspective* issue – all devoted to an event that may not have actually happened.



Crossword Puzzle

Series 10, No. 12

Last month's solution
Series 10, no. 11



1	A	2	B	3	E	4	L	5	T	6	O	7	R	8	A	9	H	10	V	11	12	E
13	D	A	V	I	D	14	B	I	B	15	V	I	G	O	R							
16	A	N	I	S	17	S	A	B	R	18	E	19	V	E	N	A						
	M	20	L	A	21	Y	E	D	22	A	L	G	A	E		S						
	24	L			25	E	L	I		26	H	I	E			27	P					
28	V	A	29	N	30	I	L	L	A	31	A	T	L	32	A	33	S	34	S			
35	A	G	E	S	36	S	H	A	M	E		38	L	I	N	T						
	T	39	M	L	S				D			40	W	O	N		I					
41	I	42	D	E	A	43	V	I	S	44	T	A	45	N	A	46	I	47	L			
49	C	H	A	M	O	I	S		51	I	M	A	G	I	N	E						
		L			50	A	S	H		54	M	I	L			N						
55	H	56	C	57	A	R	O	M	58	O	S	I	E	59	R	60		61	O			
62	A	63	S	A	P	64	R	A	65	F	T	S	66	Z	I	67	O	N				
68	S	H	I	E	D	69	E	D	H	70	T	R	A	D	E							
71	P	E	N	D	72	P	L	A	73	Y	S	74	A	L	E	S						

ACROSS:

1. Causes to feel guilty
7. Small ravine
13. Pizza topping
14. Safe place
15. Respected with awe
18. Florida export
20. Always
21. Atmosphere
23. Annoying kitchen sound
24. Old fair
25. Go off the beaten path
27. Meat flavourer, of the mint family
28. Special poem
29. One who takes a base off guard
30. Venerable (abbr.)
31. Vibrant colours
33. Not his towels
34. Child's toy
35. Opera song
36. Remain
40. Foot doctors (abbr.)
44. Each
45. Rested
48. Soak flax
49. Makes a mistake
51. One who mends clothing
52. Lady's name
53. Continent
54. Nothing excepted
55. All (comb. form)
56. A scolder
59. Text version
62. Guardian spirit
63. Yields by treaty
64. Changes
65. Formed in leather

DOWN:

2. Hung fluttering in the air
3. Watchful
4. Russian village community, or space station
5. The night before
6. Unruffled
7. Sung by a choir
8. Don't go up the creek without one
9. Type of sun ray
10. Gives for temporary use
11. Cut into wood or metal
12. Slight shake
15. Trees
17. Slip away
19. Enthusiastic
22. Asian country
25. These are sometimes worshipped
26. One who longs persistently
32. Seen overhead
33. Owned in the past
36. Sharp throwing weapons
37. Brusque
38. One who has reached the destination
39. Monk's hood
41. Oath
42. The Mennonite church was named after him
43. Suffuses with colour
46. Gems, or words of wisdom
47. Choose carefully
50. Someone who was canonized
52. Traveler's stop
57. Clothing size
58. Poetic contraction
60. _____ volente
61. Fiance's last words

Joyce